

Chlorosis

Saml. Johnson

1809.

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 10th inst. in relation to the purchase of a small share of the stock of the New York and North River Canal Company. I have the pleasure to inform you that the same has been forwarded to the proper authorities for their consideration.


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An Essay on Chlorosis,  
For the Degree  
of Doct. of Medicine,  
Submitted to the examination,  
of the Medical Professors,  
of the Provost, &  
of the Trustees, of the  
University of Pennsylvania.  
By Samuel Johnson  
of Maryland.



April 1809

In offering my sentiments on  
Chlorosis, in a Dissertation for the  
attainment of Medical honours,  
perhaps I have unfortunately  
blinded upon a subject illy  
suited to my want of experience  
& mature observation; but as my  
chief object will be to glance at  
the important claim, I conceive  
it has, on Medical attention, &  
cordially desirous to become a  
Disposer of a small share of that  
attention, it will I hope excuse my  
injudicious choice — <sup>regrets</sup>  
time have permitted I should  
have been much pleased in having

Chosen a subject better suited to my capacity.

Chlorosis generally makes its insidious ad-  
vancement about the age of puberty, when the delicate system is under the influence of that natural change towards maturity, which marks perhaps the most critical period of the female life. — Here any slight deviation from the salutary paths of nature predispose the System to very troublesome complaints; the System perhaps, is at no period more acceptable to disease. But Chlorosis does not appear to be solely confined to

the commencement of menstruation,  
in its origin, — in some delicate ha-  
bits it takes some time before  
that period, & at various times af-  
ter it. In its commencement the de-  
licate patient is observed to languish,  
with unusual Debility, lassitude &  
depression of Spirits, the cheeks  
grow rosy & pale, vivacity forsakes  
the countenance, the eyes look hea-  
vy & a bluish cast (more or less)  
is observed beneath them, Dyspep-  
sia & irritates appetite take place,  
creating very absurd cravings, after  
chalk, clay, cinders, burnt feathers  
&c; an indisposition to motion,  
accelerated respiration on the least-

exercise, & a fluttering & undulating  
inquietude are felt about the  
præcordia, the pulse becomes quick  
& frequent, though variable accord-  
-ing to the degree of febrile action  
in the system, head ache sometimes  
attended more or less of pain about the  
loins & pelvis are pretty general, &  
costiveness. — at times a general  
torpor creeps over the system, the  
urine becomes increased in quan-  
-tity & of a pal colour, though lia-  
-ble to change, — when these  
symptoms are allowed to continue  
for a while a dematous swellings  
commence which frequently  
terminate in Dropsy — retention

of the Menstrues & suppression are  
almost inseparable with Chlorosis,  
but are not to be considered as the  
sole causes of this complaint; when  
concomitant they tend to aggravate  
each other. Particular constitutions  
under particular circumstances,  
are more or less subject to Chlorosis.  
As Debility is the parent of Disease  
under all its various forms & grades,  
it hath also its share in laying the  
Fabric of this disease; this Debi-  
lity is constitutional; & acquired.  
an excess of Physical, & bodily  
sensibility are peculiar to delicate  
systems, their mode of nurture tends  
to effeminate the constitution,

Especially among females in the  
higher stations of life, where De-  
licacy of constitution & high toned  
sensibility are sought after as the  
refined state of individual preferment,  
those who are of such constitutions,  
may be said to be admirably primed  
for the influence of the passions;  
The intercommunion of sensation  
here is extremely alert & the mind  
is more ambitious, craving & in-  
tentive of desires & less able to brook  
the want of gratification in them,  
owing to the facility with which  
the mind & body take on the influ-  
ence of impressions. — There are  
often causes among females



(best known to themselves) which  
render them liable (as all mankind  
are) to disappointments in the grati-  
fication of those desires & propensi-  
ties, which might afford them plea-  
surable sensations & give energy  
to the impulses of life; — These  
disappointments become sources  
of inquietude & grief, pressing  
upon the constitution cannot do  
otherwise than abstract a portion  
from those stimuli which are  
so indispensable in the performance  
of all our functions in a healthy  
state. — It is evident that among  
females in the ordinary walks of  
life, whose wants are few, —

their sensual appetites less nice,  
more liable to receive gratification  
& who enjoy all the benefits of fresh  
air & wholesome exercise are seldom  
visited with Chlorosis. — Therefore  
where it arises, it seems peculiarly  
concomitant with delicacy of con-  
stitution, & excess of Physical & Corporeal  
sensibility, under the influence  
of the passions chiefly. — retention  
irregularity in the flowing of the  
menses, so generally attendant on  
Chlorosis, are alike peculiar to such  
constitutions as mentioned above.  
The indication of cure should be  
the same as in Morbid excitement  
from other causes, with the proviso

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of a great deal of benefit to, done  
through the instrumentality of  
the passions, where I conceive them  
to be egregiously in fault: where  
much pain & febrile action are present  
~~the~~ section & the usual remedies  
for fever are proper; — the mode  
so generally employed, of exhibiting  
emmenagogue medicines, are a  
mere palliative method, by this  
practice you remove a symptom  
only of the complaint, which  
may repeatedly recur unless you  
produce some more material  
change in the general habit. —  
it may do perhaps to treat some  
very delicate constitutions in this

way when it appears to be the only  
alternative of success; for this pur-  
-pose perhaps the moderately sti-  
-mulating purgatives & Tonics, would  
be better suited, & those which act  
chiefly on the uterine organs, as  
Tinct. of Scllebone, some of the tribe  
Siliquosa, I should look upon as  
very good purgatives here, & also  
some of the Alliacea; Rubigo Ferri  
of Sabina & Camomile Flowers &c,  
when any of the purgative <sup>men-</sup>stru-  
-gogues can be made subservient  
also to the purpose of abating  
costiveness, which is frequently  
attendant on Chlorosis I think they  
are then always advisable, here

Calomel & Aloes appear to be admirably suited. - But little success can be hoped towards permanent relief without obviating the Debility, & restoring energy to the system, after the febrile action hath been subdued, for this purpose some of the Tonics mentioned, with the help of the Bark are well adapted - but we should not lose sight of the passions in the mean time, patients should enjoy fresh air, a change of scenes, place & company, perhaps, would also be favourable, their minds should be engaged by objects

which tend to amuse them &  
keep alive their Spirits; nothing  
more effectually accomplishes  
these ends, than the sweets of  
a matrimonial life, advantage  
should always be taken of this,  
where it is acceptable with pro-  
pensity, few married women  
in the possession of amiable  
& gratifying husbands are  
ever visited with Chlorosis.

